

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church

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DHW

LESSON 23

The Book of Exodus

Chapters 28 & 29

INTRODUCTION

Moses had received from God the pattern for making the Tabernacle and all its furniture and instruments (Exodus 25 – 27). God emphatically made it clear to Moses that His pattern must be strictly followed. There was no room for any free human innovation. This indicates to us that man's access to God must be in accordance with God's prescribed way and not man's ways. For example, there was *one and only one* entrance to the Tabernacle into the presence of God. This foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is *the only way* to God.¹

¹ John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

The various items of the furniture of the Tabernacle were mentioned in the preceding three chapters, namely, the Ark, the Mercy-seat, the Table of Shewbread, the Lampstand and the Brazen Altar. Having given how they were to be made, the next questions would be how they would be used and who would be using or handling them. In the present two chapters, 28 and 29 we will learn about the people who would be using and handling these things.

In the last two verses of chapter 27, Aaron and his sons were assigned to light the Lampstand in the Holy Place and that the flame should be kept burning *always* meaning eternally (27:20), and the priests would take turns *from evening to morning before the LORD* to tend to it (27:21). The appointment of the people to prepare and use these things would be formally given by God through Moses.

This study should teach us some guiding principles in our

worship and service to God. The following is an outline of the two chapters to facilitate our study:

- 1) The various garments of the priests must be specially made (Exodus 28:1-30);
- 2) Aaron as chief priest would wear the high priestly robes (Exodus 28:31-43);
- 3) The LORD prescribed the way the priesthood would be consecrated unto Him (Exodus 29:1-28);
- 4) Aaron and his sons were specially set apart to serve in the Tabernacle as priests (Exodus 29:29-37);
- 5) The daily offerings would be made in the Tabernacle unto the LORD (Exodus 29:38-46).

STUDY THE WORD

The Garments of the Priesthood

The LORD commanded Moses to take from the children of

Israel Aaron and his sons, namely, *Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar*, to the office of priests to minister unto the LORD (28:1). Observe that they were specially chosen by God. Moses did not nominate them neither did they appoint themselves to be priests. Not only was the Tabernacle to be built according to God's pattern, Aaron and his sons, who served God as priests, must also perform their service according to God's prescribed way. Again there was no room for any human improvisation. They would have to wear specially made garments. These garments were not clothes for everyday wearing. They were garments used only by the priests whenever they performed their duty in the Tabernacle. In other words, when the people saw them wearing these garments, they would recognize that they were priests and they were performing their work. The office of the priest was to serve God.² God instructed

² In Numbers 3:5-6 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near,*

Moses to make the *holy garments* for Aaron, his brother. They are described as *holy*, and *for glory and for beauty* (28:2). These three words are very significant. *Holy* (Hebrew, *qodesh*) means “set apart”; *glory* (Hebrew, *kavod*) literally means “weighty” meaning “glorious”; and *beauty* (Hebrew, *tipara*) meaning “beautiful.” These qualities describe the attributes of God. God is holy; who is set apart from men in purity. God is glorious for He works all things for His glory;³ and He is beautiful in His holiness and glory.⁴

These sacred garments worn by Aaron and his sons would set them apart from the rest of the people in their service unto the

and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him; the LORD instructed Moses to take in the tribe of Levi to serve Him together with Aaron and his sons to serve the LORD as priests.

³ Psalm 148:13 *Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.*

⁴ Psalm 29:2 *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*

LORD as priests. God would see to it that those who made the sacred garments would be filled with the *spirit of wisdom* (28:3). The design and making of the holy garments required special technical skill which God would endow these craftsmen. These garments were the breastplate, the ephod, a robe, an embroidered coat, a turban (headgear), and a girdle (28:4). The colours used for the making of these garments were also specific and significant – blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen (white).

The Ephod

The *ephod* was mentioned first. It is the outer garment skilfully sewn. On the shoulders, two *onyx stones* were placed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on them – six names on one stone and six names on the other according to their birth (28:9, 10). Aaron would bear their names before the LORD upon his shoulders to remember them before the LORD (28:12).

Another piece of garment linked with the ephod was the

breastplate of judgment (28:15). It was the breastplate for making divine and judicial decisions. The breastplate was square and double folded. In addition, there were twelve precious stones set on the breastplate, each being engraved with the name of one tribe. There were two other stones, the *Urim and the Thummim* (28:30) which were placed in the breastplate. Interestingly, *Urim* begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*aleph*), and *Thummim* the last letter (*tau*).⁵ These two names mean “lights” and “perfections” respectively. Aaron would bear the decisions concerning the children of Israel before the LORD. There is no consensus on how Aaron arrived at the decisions. The stones could be one with a “yes” or a “no.”⁶

⁵ They can be used in the sense of “alpha and omega”, the beginning and the end” Revelation 1:8 - *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* It was the Lord Jesus Christ who said these words.

⁶ Chinese devotees ask their gods for a decision by casting into the air two wooden kidney-shaped objects, one side flat and the other side curved, and let them land on the

The High Priestly Robes

The robe of the ephod was a one-piece garment which Aaron wore down from his shoulders to his ankles. This robe would be blue in colour. The opening around the neck would be woven work without any break. This blue robe had golden bells and pomegranates on the hem of the robe. Observe the colours to be used in the making of the pomegranates – blue, purple, scarlet and small golden bells in between the pomegranates round about the hem. Aaron the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies when he ministered unto the LORD. The tinkling of the bells would indicate to those outside that he was well and that the offering unto the LORD was accepted, and that he did not die (28:35).

ground. Depending on the which side each of the objects landed they decipher either the decision is “yes” or “no” or a “smile” (a yes-no decision). The casting of lot was a common practice among the Israelites. Proverbs 16:33 *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD* indicates that God is in control in the casting of lot.

Aaron would wear a turban and on it a plate of pure gold with the words *HOLINESS TO THE LORD* engraved on it (28:36). This plate of gold was fixed to the turban by a blue lace tied round the turban above the forehead. It was like a head-band. Aaron, the High Priest must wear this headgear always to *bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts* (28:38). What it means is that whenever the children of Israel came with their sin offering their sin offering must be presented by the High Priest for the offering to be accepted.

The High Priest must also wear an under-garment with a girdle when wearing his blue robe. The same also applied to the turban. These items would be made with fine linen (28:39). Then Moses was instructed to provide clothing for the sons of Aaron. These garments were coats including the girdles and bonnets. They were to have *breeches* which were fine linen piece of cloth

covering their hips and thighs (28:43). When wearing them they would show that they were priests and thus setting them apart from the people for the glory and beauty of the LORD (28:40)

After that Moses was to anoint, consecrate and sanctify them for the holy service unto the LORD (28:41). They must strictly observe all these things when ministering unto the LORD. Anything that was not in accordance with the instructions of the LORD would result in death (28:43).

The Consecration of the Priesthood

Now the LORD instructed Moses how to *hallow* the priests so that they could minister unto the LORD (29:1). The things required for the consecration were listed: one young bullock, two rams with no defects, unleavened bread, unleavened cakes tempered with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and all these should be made from wheat-flour (29:2). The latter should be

brought to the Tabernacle in a basket with the animals.

The Sin Offering

Before the offering of the sacrifice, Aaron and his sons would be brought to the entrance of the Tabernacle wearing the full regalia of the priestly clothes. Moses would anoint Aaron by pouring the holy anointing oil on his head and after that his sons would be next.

The first sacrifice was the offering of the bullock. Aaron and his sons were to place their hands on the head of the animal. The bullock would then be killed before the LORD by the door of the Tabernacle. Then Moses would take the blood of the bullock and with his finger dipped with the blood and stained the horns of the altar. The remainder of the blood would be all poured out beside the Brazen Altar. And the flesh, the skin, the dung of the bullock would be taken outside the camp and be burnt. This was *a sin offering* (29:14).

The Burnt Offering

Then Moses would take one ram. Like the sin offering, Aaron and his sons would place their hands on the head of the ram (29:15). The ram would be killed and all its blood sprinkled round about the Brazen Altar. The ram would be cut into pieces, its inward parts washed, its legs placed on the pieces of its meat and head and the whole ram would be burnt on the Brazen Altar. This was *a burnt offering unto the LORD of a sweet savour* (29:18). The burnt offering was made after the sin offering, and by the virtue of the latter, the burnt offering was *a sweet savour*, “a pleasing aroma.”

For the other ram the usual ritual was followed. Aaron and his sons would lay their hands on the head of the ram. The ram would be killed. Moses would take the blood of the ram and smear it on the right ear of Aaron, and his sons, and upon their right thumbs, and upon the great toes of their right feet (29:20). The blood

would be sprinkled round about the Brazen Altar. Then Moses would sprinkle the blood and the anointing oil on Aaron and his sons, and on their garments. In this way, as the LORD prescribed, Aaron would be hallowed as well as his sons. After that Moses would take the fat, the rump, the fat that covered the inward parts, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys and the fat around them, and the right shoulder; and one loaf of bread, one cake of oiled bread, one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread and put them on the hands of Aaron and on the hands of his sons (29:22-24a). Aaron and his sons would then *wave them for a wave offering before the LORD* (24b). Moses would then take all the things that they were holding and burnt them on the Brazen Altar for *a burnt offering, a sweet savour offering* (29:25).

Now Moses would take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration and wave it for a *wave offering* before the LORD

and it would be his portion or share (29:26). In other words, Moses functioned as a priest here. Then Moses would take the breast of the *wave offering*, and the shoulder (thigh) of *the heave offering*, and these parts were for Aaron and his sons. These proceedings would become a lasting statute (an ordinance) forever to be observed by the children of Israel for *a heave offering*, and also *for peace offerings* unto the LORD.

Aaron & His Sons Are to Serve in the Tabernacle as Priests

Aaron's holy garments could only be used by his sons when Aaron had served his term. The son who succeeded him should wear the holy garments of the High Priest for seven days when he would come to the Holy Place to minister unto the LORD. Each day he would have to sacrifice a bullock as a sin offering for atonement for seven days. Each time when he had offered the sin offering, he should cleanse the

Brazen Altar (29:36). As regards the ram, the priests would eat the flesh of the ram for the seven days by the entrance of the Tabernacle (29:32). In this way they would be sanctified. A stranger might not eat the meat which was holy. And the remainder of the meat should all be burnt.

Daily Offerings

Two more offerings were necessary. Two lambs of the first year would be required. The LORD gave Moses precise instructions as to what was to be done on a continual daily basis. Each lamb would be killed in the morning and in the evening and offered on the Brazen Altar. Each lamb would then be offered in the morning and evening. One lamb would be offered with *a tenth deal of flour* (about 2.3 litres) mixed with *a fourth part of an hin of beaten oil* (about 1 litre) and about one litre of wine in the morning as *a drink offering*. The lamb would be offered as a sweet savour offering (29:40, 41).

These daily offerings of the lamb must be done throughout Aaron's descendants at the door of the Tabernacle before the LORD, where the LORD would meet with them and speak to them (29:42). The LORD declared that He would sanctify the Tabernacle and further promised that at that place He would meet the children of Israel. He would set apart Aaron and his sons who would minister unto Him as priests. The LORD would dwell among the children of Israel and would be their God. In return, they should know who the LORD their God was that brought them out of the land of Egypt that He was in their midst and He their LORD God.

PRACTICAL VALUE

God chose Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel to serve the Lord as priests. The office of priests was not the people's innovation but it was the Lord's choosing. This principle of choosing leaders for God's work should also be applied to the

church. God will call a person to full-time ministry. Although He will not tell us in the way that He commanded Moses, the person whom He called would have a strong sense of His calling. And when he shares with the leaders of the church, the Holy Spirit will give the confirmation through the leaders. The point is that there is no such thing as a self-appointed pastors, elders, and deacons of the church.

The meticulous way of making the proper attire of the priests teaches us that our worship and service to God must be done with cleanliness, dignity and beauty. We should never worship and serve the LORD our God in a sloppy manner wearing shorts, T-shirts, sandals or slippers to worship the LORD on the Lord's Day. We put our best clothes when we visit some important dignitaries. Should we not do our very best when we meet the Lord?

The sin offering must be carried out before the burnt offering. The two offerings are

different. The sin offering is for the cleansing and sanctifying of a person for his sins which must be forgiven and cleansed. The burnt offering was a sweet savour to the Lord and it was carried out by one who served the Lord. The sin offering is a picture of Christ's redemptive or atoning work. Christ died on the cross so that our sins can be cleansed and forgiven. For a person to serve the Lord, he must first be cleansed from his sins. Otherwise he may not serve the Lord. Therefore, only Christians who are born-again can serve the Lord in the church.

The burnt offering pictures the Christian giving his all to the service of the Lord. It is as Paul said in Romans 12:1 - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*** Paul was addressing Christians in Rome, and he called on them to offer their life a living sacrifice unto the Lord. It is a total

consecration of ourselves to God to do his bidding. And the accompanying wave offering and drink offering and peace offering all picture the fellowship we have with God. It is a wonderful and meaningful cycle. When we give our burnt offering, the Lord will be pleased and He will bless us. Therefore we can enjoy what He blesses us and we in turn return a portion back to Him and the cycle goes on. This is wonderful. The sin offering and the burnt offering picture what we are and how we ought to serve Him. Let us remember these things when we go to church to worship the Lord on the Lord's Day. We should go with an attitude of sincerity and truth manifesting the holiness, glory and beauty of the LORD our God showing by the way we dress ourselves. AMEN